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August 26, 2013

Ms. Nancy Lewis
Associate Administrator for Enforcement
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W45-306
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Lewis:

Subject: Ford Motor Company (Ford) Recall No. 13S08 – Certain 2005 through 2011 model year Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis, and Lincoln Town Car vehicles for lower intermediate shaft corrosion

Summary

- Ford Action – Ford is conducting a voluntary safety recall involving certain 2005 through 2011 model year Ford Crown Victoria, Mercury Grand Marquis, and Lincoln Town Car vehicles for lower intermediate shaft corrosion.
- Number of Vehicles Involved – Ford estimates that there are approximately 355,000 vehicles in operation that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.
- Effect on Vehicle Operation – Severe corrosion of the lower intermediate shaft that leads to stiffening or seizure of the lower intermediate shaft swing link joint(s) may introduce unexpected forces on the steering system that can eventually cause the upper intermediate shaft to collapse and the steering column lower bearing to separate. If the lower bearing separates, the vehicle may experience a loss of steering, increasing the risk of a crash.

Field reports indicate that many drivers observe a change in steering feel (notchy, stiff, binding) when the lower intermediate shaft swing link joint(s) begins stiffening due to corrosion or when the steering column lower bearing retainer migrates out of the steering column jacket, causing them to seek service prior to any loss of steering function.

Ford is not aware of any reported accidents or injuries related to this condition.

- Service Procedure – Owners will be notified by mail and instructed to take their vehicle(s) to a Ford or Lincoln dealer to have the lower intermediate shaft replaced. The upper intermediate shaft and steering column lower bearing will be inspected to identify any damage that may have occurred as a result of lower intermediate shaft corrosion, and repaired or replaced as necessary. If the steering column lower bearing has separated, a retainer clip will be installed.

The detailed information required by the applicable portions of 49 CFR Part 573 – Defect and Non-Compliance Information Report is attached.

Sincerely,



for Steven M. Kenner

Attachment

49 CFR Part 573 – DEFECT INFORMATION REPORT
13S08 – CERTAIN 2005 THROUGH 2011 MODEL YEAR FORD CROWN VICTORIA,
MERCURY GRAND MARQUIS AND LINCOLN TOWN CAR VEHICLES – LOWER
INTERMEDIATE SHAFT CORROSION

Pursuant to Part 573 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Defect and Non-Compliance Reports, Ford Motor Company submits the following information concerning a safety recall action that it is voluntarily initiating.

573.6 (c) (2) – Potentially Affected Vehicles

Vehicles potentially affected are certain 2005 through 2011 model year Ford Crown Victoria (including Crown Victoria Police Interceptors) and Mercury Grand Marquis vehicles built at St. Thomas Assembly Plant, 2005 through 2007 model year Lincoln Town Car vehicles built at Wixom Assembly Plant, and certain 2008 through 2011 model year Lincoln Town Car vehicles built at St. Thomas Assembly Plant that are currently registered or were originally sold in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

These vehicles are not produced in VIN order. Information as to the applicability of this action to specific vehicles can best be obtained by either calling Ford's toll-free line (1-866-436-7332) or by contacting a local Ford or Lincoln dealer who can obtain specific information regarding the vehicles from the Ford On-line Automotive Service Information System (OASIS) database.

The information for the supplier of lower intermediate shaft, that is the subject of this defect report, is provided below.

Lower intermediate shaft:

ThyssenKrupp
3155 W. Big Beaver Road, Suite 260
Troy, MI 48084
Contact Person: John Douma
Contact Number: (248) 530-2937
Country of Origin for the component: Liechtenstein

573.6 (c) (3) – Estimated Population of Vehicles Potentially Affected

Ford estimates that there are approximately 355,000 vehicles in operation that were either originally sold in or are currently registered in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin are potentially affected.

573.6 (c) (4) – Estimated Percentage of Affected Vehicles with the Defect Condition

Unknown.

573.6 (c) (5) – Description of the Defect

Severe corrosion of the lower intermediate shaft that leads to stiffening or seizure of the lower intermediate shaft swing link joint(s) may introduce unexpected forces on the steering system eventually causing the upper intermediate shaft to collapse and the steering column lower bearing to separate. If the lower bearing separates, the vehicle may experience a loss of steering, increasing the risk of a crash.

Field reports indicate that many drivers observe a change in steering feel (notchy, stiff, binding, etc.) when the lower intermediate shaft swing link joint(s) begins stiffening due to corrosion or when the steering column lower bearing retainer migrates out of the steering column jacket, causing them to seek service prior to any loss of steering function.

Ford is not aware of any reports of accidents or injuries related to this condition.

573.6 (c) (6) – Chronology of Events

On September 14, 2012, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) opened a preliminary evaluation (PE12-025) on 2005 through 2008 Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptors (CVPIs) for allegations of separation of the upper intermediate steering shaft from the steering column causing a loss of steering control. NHTSA had received three Vehicle Owner Questionnaires (VOQs) alleging a separation that resulted in a loss of steering and ten additional VOQs alleging a partial separation of the steering column lower bearing. Coincident with the opening of the investigation, the Office of Defects Investigation (ODI) and Ford inspected vehicles at the Montgomery County, Maryland, police fleet garage. ODI collected parts following the inspection.

On November 9, 2012, Ford submitted its response to PE12-025. Ford identified eight allegations of loss of steering that may have resulted from a separation of the steering column lower bearing on the subject 2005 through 2008 model year Ford CVPIs. ODI had also named peer vehicles (2005 through 2011 model year Mercury Grand Marquis vehicles and 2005 through 2011 model year Ford Crown Victoria vehicles, excluding the subject 2005-2008 model year Ford CVPIs). Ford identified four allegations of loss of steering that may have resulted from a separation of the steering column lower bearing on the peer vehicles.

During late December 2012 and January 2013, Ford contracted an outside organization to inspect police fleet vehicles located in non-corrosion areas (Palm Beach County, FL, Phoenix, AZ, and San Diego, CA). The contractor inspected a total of 146 vehicles and provided measurements, observations, and photographic documentation of the lower intermediate shaft, upper intermediate shaft and lower steering column. Additionally, data was collected from the fleets about vehicle histories, including prior collisions. No corroded lower intermediate shafts were found.

On April 26, 2013, NHTSA upgraded their PE12-025 to an engineering analysis (EA13-004).

In June and July 2013, Ford inspected vehicles in Connecticut and Michigan. These inspections included two vehicles with loss of steering allegations in Connecticut. Neither report alleged an accident or injury. In addition, Ford performed a 26 vehicle inspection of Michigan State Police vehicles being prepared for auction, and a 13 vehicle inspection of Ford employee-owned vehicles in Michigan.

On August 19, 2013, Ford's Field Review Committee reviewed the concern and approved a field action.

573.6 (c) (8) – Service Program

Owners will be notified by mail and instructed to take their vehicle(s) to a Ford or Lincoln dealer to have the lower intermediate shaft replaced. The upper intermediate shaft and steering column lower bearing will be inspected to identify any damage that may have occurred as a result of lower intermediate shaft corrosion, and repaired or replaced as necessary. If the steering column lower bearing has separated, a retainer clip will be installed.

Initially, parts will be available in very limited quantities. During this initial period an interim inspection procedure will be developed for vehicles brought to dealerships.

Mailing of owner notification letters is expected to begin October 21, 2013, and completed by October 23, 2013. Notification to dealers will occur on August 28, 2013.

Ford's general reimbursement plan for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners prior to notification of a safety recall was provided to the agency on February 20, 2013.

573.6 (c) (10) – Press Statement and Dealer/Owner Letters

National media attention is likely as with most Ford recalls when posted to NHTSA's safecar.gov website. Ford will provide public comments when requested. A news release will not be issued.

Ford will forward a copy of the notification letters to dealers and owners to the agency when available.

573.6 (c) (11) – Recall Number

Ford has assigned recall number 13S08 to this action.

573.13 (c) (2) – Ending Date for Reimbursement Eligibility

The ending date for reimbursement eligibility for the cost of remedies paid for by vehicle owners per Ford's general reimbursement plan is December 15, 2013.

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